

## How the Public Health Worker Feels About His Job

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THE public health worker's feelings about his job—his satisfactions and his dissatisfactions—was one of several areas of study included in the Yale Public Health Personnel Research Project, which sought to provide information that would be useful in improving public health administration. For this portion of the project, 1,098 professional and semiprofessional workers in selected public health agencies were interviewed. The agencies included the State health departments of Connecticut, Maryland, and Michigan, several county health departments and visiting nurse associations in these States, and one large county health department in New York. The sampling process and the interview techniques are described in the May 1955 *Public Health Reports*, pages 447-452. Since the development of a method proved to be equally as important

in this project as the collection of data, the findings demonstrate both the use of the method and certain attitudes characteristic of public health workers.

The satisfactions and dissatisfactions expressed by the workers fell quite naturally into four categories.

First, there was a like or dislike for public health in general. Remarks such as "I enjoy public health work," "I get a feeling of accomplishment in public health," and "I find public health work satisfying," or "I dislike public health work," "I cannot use my previous training and experience in public health," and "I cannot see any results in public health" were classified in this group. The term "public health in general" defies exact definition. Obviously, the worker's concept of public health has been conditioned by his own experiences; had his experiences been other than what they were, his concept of public health might have been different.

The second major category concerned salary and job security. It included such individual items as salary, provisions for retirement and pensions, tenure, and opportunities for advancement.

Recognition and appreciation in the agency, a "feeling of belonging," and relationships with co-workers composed a third group, which was called status in the agency and interpersonal relations.

The fourth category, labeled conditions of work, related to such factors as working hours, working facilities, amount of clerical work, place of work (in the office or in the field), phys-

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ical demands of the job, and freedom and responsibility to make decisions.

In considering the data presented in the following pages, it should be remembered that the agencies studied were selected as better-than-average organizations and consequently may not be representative of all agencies. Rather detailed data are presented in the tables, but many of the findings are not discussed because the information necessary to proper evaluation is not available to the authors, inasmuch as the Yale study did not encompass case studies of individual health agencies; because many of the subgroups of workers are too small for valid generalizations; and because the need for keeping the report within a reasonable length precludes extensive discussion.

### **Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions**

Sixty percent of the public health workers interviewed in this study said that they were happy with their work, even though some of them mentioned dissatisfaction with specific aspects of their jobs (table 1). Thirty-eight percent liked the conditions under which they worked; 32 percent found pleasure in their relations with their associates or in the recognition they received in the agency; and 22 percent expressed satisfaction with salary or job security.

Dissatisfaction was encountered most frequently in relation to the conditions of work, about which 33 percent of the workers were unhappy. Twenty-five percent were not satisfied with salary or job security, and 15 percent complained about their lack of status or their unsatisfactory relations with associates. Fourteen percent of the workers were dissatisfied with public health work generally.

The frequency of expressions of satisfaction varied somewhat with position in the administrative hierarchy and the governmental level of the agency. Notably the percentage of State health department staff workers (includes both junior and senior staffs) who expressed satisfaction with public health work was lower than the percentage of any other group. Associated with this was the fact that a lower percentage of State staff personnel than of any other group spoke of enjoying their status in the agency or

their relations with associates. Furthermore, satisfaction with working conditions was expressed less frequently by State workers, regardless of administrative level. Only with respect to salary and job security did a greater proportion of State than of local personnel express satisfaction.

With one exception, there were no important differences related to governmental or administrative level in the expression of dissatisfactions. The exception concerned salary and job security, with which relatively few high-echelon personnel (includes all personnel of supervisor and higher rank) in State health departments were dissatisfied.

### **Public Health in General**

Varying percentages of the workers expressed no feelings, one way or the other, about public health work in general. However, between 12 and 15 percent were unhappy with public health, and about two-thirds of the high-echelon personnel in State and local jurisdictions and of staff personnel in local agencies and 43 percent of the staff personnel in State health departments expressed satisfaction with public health (table 2).

The low proportion of workers among State staff personnel expressing satisfaction can be attributed primarily to the fact that a relatively small proportion of laboratory staff personnel in State health departments appear to be happy in public health, and such personnel constitute a large segment of the State staff workers. The feelings of the staff laboratory workers in State health departments are in striking contrast to those of the staff laboratory workers in the local health departments. Medical and statistics staff personnel in State health departments also showed relatively little enthusiasm for public health.

### **Salary and Job Security**

About half of the workers were noncommittal about salary and job security, and the remainder were almost evenly divided in expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction with these aspects of their jobs (table 3).

Dissatisfaction centered upon salary. Staff

**Table 1. Satisfactions and dissatisfactions of State and local public health workers<sup>1</sup>**

Administrative and governmental level	Number of workers	Percent expressing satisfaction with—				Percent expressing dissatisfaction with—			
		Public health work in general	Salary and job security	Status and inter-personal relations	Working conditions	Public health work in general	Salary and job security	Status and inter-personal relations	Working conditions
<i>Staff</i>									
Local	482	67	14	35	42	15	29	14	31
State	302	43	33	24	29	14	29	19	32
<i>High-echelon</i>									
Local	153	66	20	37	46	12	22	18	40
State	161	63	30	35	32	12	10	12	34
Total	1, 098	60	22	32	38	14	25	15	33

<sup>1</sup> Includes workers in visiting nurse associations.

**Table 2. Feelings of health department personnel<sup>1</sup> about public health work**

Governmental level and service	Staff			High-echelon		
	Number	Percent dissatisfied	Percent satisfied	Number	Percent dissatisfied	Percent satisfied
<b>Local</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>66</b>
Medical	5	20	60	36	17	58
Nursing	349	16	70	78	8	69
Sanitation	84	16	57	15	20	67
Laboratory	19	16	95	8	12	50
Health education	6	0	50	3	0	67
Statistics	6	17	33	0		
Administration	0			4	0	100
Other	13	8	54	9	22	67
<b>State</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>63</b>
Medical	15	13	27	31	19	61
Nursing	14	0	100	27	15	56
Sanitation	47	13	81	27	11	82
Laboratory	158	15	37	23	17	52
Health education	7	0	0	5	0	20
Statistics	21	5	29	10	10	90
Administration	3	33	67	11	0	45
Other	37	27	24	27	4	70

<sup>1</sup> Includes personnel in visiting nurse associations.

workers in State health departments also complained about the lack of opportunities for advancement. The expression of dissatisfaction with retirement plans and pensions and tenure was minimal.

Except for high-echelon personnel in State health departments, only 7 percent of whom considered their salary inadequate, roughly 20 percent of the workers were dissatisfied with their salaries. In the local health departments, a relatively high proportion of sanitation per-

sonnel at both administrative levels complained about salary. In the State health departments, staff nurses were most concerned.

Nineteen percent of the staff workers in State health departments, as compared to 3 percent of other public health workers, were unhappy about the lack of opportunities for advancement. Sanitation and laboratory staff personnel in State health departments were largely responsible for this high proportion.

On the positive side, almost equal percentages

expressed satisfaction with salary, retirement plans and pensions, and tenure. A relatively small number praised the opportunities for advancement.

About 10 percent of the workers felt that their salaries were good: The proportion was somewhat higher for State than for local personnel and for workers at the higher administrative levels than for staff workers. The dif-

ference between State and local personnel was particularly noticeable in the sanitation service, where more State workers at both administrative levels than their counterparts in local health departments appeared to be satisfied with their salaries. Furthermore, among high-echelon personnel in the State health departments, satisfaction with salary was more common among sanitation personnel than among

**Table 3. Feelings of health department personnel<sup>1</sup> about salary and job security**

Position and service	Number	Percent dissatisfied with—					Percent satisfied with—				
		Any aspect of salary and job security <sup>2</sup>	Salary	Retirement and pensions	Tenure	Opportunities for advancement	Any aspect of salary and job security <sup>2</sup>	Salary	Retirement and pensions	Tenure	Opportunities for advancement
<i>Staff</i>											
<b>Local</b> .....	<b>482</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
Medical.....	5	40	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursing.....	349	22	15	1	0	3	15	6	3	7	5
Sanitation.....	84	52	50	2	2	5	8	4	4	4	0
Laboratory.....	19	20	10	0	0	10	10	5	0	0	5
Health education.....	6	33	17	0	17	0	17	17	0	0	0
Statistics.....	6	17	17	0	0	0	33	0	17	17	0
Administration.....	0										
Other.....	13	38	38	0	0	0	38	23	31	23	8
<b>State</b> .....	<b>302</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>
Medical.....	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursing.....	14	57	57	0	0	0	21	0	0	7	0
Sanitation.....	47	43	34	8	2	34	55	21	43	45	4
Laboratory.....	158	30	15	2	1	22	32	10	17	12	5
Health education.....	7	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	14	0
Statistics.....	21	19	14	0	0	10	43	19	43	5	10
Administration.....	3	67	33	0	0	33	67	33	33	67	33
Other.....	37	27	27	14	0	14	24	19	0	0	0
<i>High-echelon</i>											
<b>Local</b> .....	<b>153</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
Medical.....	36	17	14	0	6	6	22	19	14	8	0
Nursing.....	78	17	14	0	0	2	17	9	13	9	6
Sanitation.....	15	47	47	0	0	13	33	0	20	20	7
Laboratory.....	8	50	50	12	0	12	25	25	12	0	0
Health education.....	3	0	0	0	0	0	33	33	0	0	0
Statistics.....	0										
Administration.....	4	50	50	0	25	25	0	0	0	0	0
Other.....	9	22	22	0	11	0	11	0	0	0	11
<b>State</b> .....	<b>161</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>
Medical.....	31	6	3	0	3	0	23	6	13	3	3
Nursing.....	27	7	4	4	4	0	7	0	0	7	0
Sanitation.....	27	7	7	0	0	0	52	37	52	48	11
Laboratory.....	23	22	22	0	0	4	44	22	35	17	9
Health education.....	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Statistics.....	10	0	0	0	0	0	50	10	30	10	10
Administration.....	11	27	0	0	0	27	18	9	9	0	0
Other.....	27	11	7	0	4	0	30	22	4	4	4

<sup>1</sup> Includes personnel in visiting nurse associations.

<sup>2</sup> Includes an occasional individual not included in the subcategories listed.

personnel of the medical and nursing services.

As with salaries, appreciation of retirement and pension plans and of tenure was expressed more often by State than by local and by high-echelon than by staff personnel. Here again, a larger proportion of State than of local sanitation personnel and, to a lesser extent, a larger proportion of State than of local laboratory personnel, appeared satisfied with these bene-

fits. The proportions among State sanitation and laboratory personnel were also greater than the proportions among State medical and nursing personnel.

#### Agency Status and Interpersonal Relations

Fifteen percent of the workers were dissatisfied with their status in the agency and their

**Table 4. Feelings of health department personnel<sup>1</sup> about status in the agency and interpersonal relations**

Position and service	Number	Percent dissatisfied with—				Percent satisfied with—			
		Any aspect of interpersonal relations and status <sup>2</sup>	Interpersonal relations	Recognition and appreciation	Feeling of belonging	Any aspect of interpersonal relations and status <sup>2</sup>	Interpersonal relations	Recognition and appreciation	Feeling of belonging
<i>Staff</i>									
<b>Local</b> .....	<b>482</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>
Medical.....	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursing.....	349	14	2	10	2	40	35	10	16
Sanitation.....	84	7	4	1	0	24	21	2	16
Laboratory.....	19	16	0	10	10	21	21	5	10
Health education.....	6	33	17	33	33	0	0	0	0
Statistics.....	6	17	17	0	0	33	0	0	33
Administration.....	0								
Other.....	13	31	15	23	15	31	31	23	23
<b>State</b> .....	<b>302</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
Medical.....	15	0	0	0	0	7	7	0	0
Nursing.....	14	0	0	0	0	7	7	7	7
Sanitation.....	47	21	0	19	6	62	62	30	43
Laboratory.....	158	19	0	16	10	17	17	5	2
Health education.....	7	29	14	29	14	14	14	0	0
Statistics.....	21	0	0	0	0	38	33	19	19
Administration.....	3	0	0	0	0	67	67	67	67
Other.....	37	40	0	35	27	8	8	3	3
<i>High-echelon</i>									
<b>Local</b> .....	<b>153</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
Medical.....	36	14	14	6	3	30	28	14	6
Nursing.....	78	17	1	13	2	40	38	17	14
Sanitation.....	15	27	7	13	0	40	27	13	13
Laboratory.....	8	25	0	12	12	38	38	25	25
Health education.....	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Statistics.....	0								
Administration.....	4	25	0	25	0	75	50	0	25
Other.....	9	33	22	11	0	22	22	11	11
<b>State</b> .....	<b>161</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>
Medical.....	31	6	3	3	0	29	23	13	13
Nursing.....	27	4	0	0	0	30	30	4	7
Sanitation.....	27	7	0	4	4	82	74	48	37
Laboratory.....	23	22	4	9	13	39	26	13	9
Health education.....	5	20	0	20	0	20	20	0	0
Statistics.....	10	10	0	0	0	20	20	20	20
Administration.....	11	0	0	0	0	9	0	9	0
Other.....	27	26	4	26	7	15	15	4	7

<sup>1</sup> Includes personnel in visiting nurse associations.

<sup>2</sup> Includes an occasional individual not included in the subcategories listed.

relationships on the job; 32 percent were satisfied; and the remainder had no strong feelings about these aspects of their job (table 4). Although there were no significant differences on the basis of governmental or administrative level with respect to all dissatisfactions in this category, it should be noted that fewer State health department staff personnel than any other comparable group expressed satisfaction with these aspects of their jobs. The only important difference among the services was the high proportion of State sanitation personnel who expressed satisfaction.

The most frequent complaint related to lack of recognition and appreciation in the agency. Eleven percent of the workers made this complaint. It was expressed most often by staff personnel in State health departments, and among these, by sanitation, laboratory, and "other" workers. By contrast, high-echelon personnel in State health departments made this complaint relatively infrequently.

Eleven percent of the workers also expressed satisfaction with the appreciation and recognition given them in their agencies. The proportion was somewhat greater among high-echelon than among staff personnel. It is interesting to note that a relatively high percentage of sanitation personnel in State health departments expressed satisfaction with this feature of their work. The frequency with which sanitation personnel react, either favorably or unfavorably, to the recognition given them might be an indication of the importance which they attach to status.

Five percent of the workers indicated that they missed what can be called a feeling of belonging in their organization. Once again, staff personnel in State health departments were the group that seemed to be the most dissatisfied. Among the services, laboratory personnel were the most prone to make this complaint, although only 10 percent did so.

Fourteen percent of the workers commented that they felt very much a part of the agency. Sanitation personnel in State health departments stood out in this respect.

Dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations was relatively rare; only 2 percent of all personnel voiced this complaint.

On the other hand, nearly 30 percent of the

workers felt that their good relationships with co-workers were important enough to mention. Among staff personnel, nurses in local health departments and members of the sanitation service in State health departments seemed particularly appreciative of good working relationships with their colleagues. This was also true of high-echelon personnel in State health departments.

### **Conditions of Work**

One-third of the workers were dissatisfied with one or another of the conditions of their work (table 5). State and local workers, staff and high-echelon personnel, were about equally dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction was greatest among staff laboratory personnel in local health departments and staff sanitation and health education personnel in State health departments.

On the positive side, more than one-third of the workers expressed satisfaction with some aspect of their working conditions. More local than State personnel expressed such satisfaction. The proportion of satisfied sanitation personnel ran somewhat higher than that for the other services. As pointed out previously, a high proportion of State sanitation personnel also expressed dissatisfaction with some aspect of working conditions. It would appear from these findings that sanitation personnel are more sensitive than others to the conditions under which they work.

The greatest number of complaints about working conditions concerned excessive clerical work and inadequate work facilities.

Sixteen percent of the workers were unhappy about what they considered to be excessive clerical work. Such tasks appeared to be most oppressive to high-echelon personnel in local health departments and least oppressive to staff workers in State health departments. Sanitation personnel in State health departments and high-echelon nurses in local health departments were particularly unhappy about their burden of clerical work.

Fourteen percent of the workers complained about inadequate work facilities. State and local workers, regardless of administrative level, had similar proportions. Less than 3 percent

of the workers were inclined to praise the facilities. Laboratory and statistics personnel felt the lack of facilities most keenly.

Six percent of the workers complained of lack of freedom and responsibility in their jobs. Such complaints tended to be more frequent among State staff than local staff personnel. They were voiced most frequently by staff med-

ical personnel in State and local health departments and by staff sanitation personnel in State health departments.

On the other hand, the opportunities for freedom and responsibility which their jobs afforded them were satisfying to 23 percent of the workers. As might be expected from other findings of this study, such feelings were least

**Table 5. Feelings of health department personnel<sup>1</sup> about conditions of work**

Position and service	Number	Percent dissatisfied with—							Percent satisfied with—					
		Any aspect of work conditions	Lack of freedom and responsibility	Length of working day	Arduous nature of work	Work facilities	Indoor work	Excessive clerical work	Any aspect of work conditions	Opportunities for freedom and responsibility	Length of working day	Easy nature of work	Work facilities	Outdoor work
<i>Staff</i>														
<b>Local</b> .....	<b>482</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>
Medical.....	5	40	20	0	0	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursing.....	349	32	2	1	1	13	4	20	42	27	24	3	6	11
Sanitation.....	84	14	6	0	0	1	2	11	49	27	11	5	1	16
Laboratory.....	19	63	10	5	16	37	0	16	42	21	26	5	0	5
Health education.....	6	33	0	0	0	17	0	33	17	17	0	0	0	0
Statistics.....	6	50	0	0	0	33	0	33	17	0	17	0	0	0
Administration.....	0													
Other.....	13	54	0	0	0	38	0	23	46	38	31	15	0	0
<b>State</b> .....	<b>302</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
Medical.....	15	20	13	0	0	0	0	27	7	7	0	0	0	0
Nursing.....	14	14	0	0	7	0	0	14	14	14	0	0	0	0
Sanitation.....	47	57	17	26	4	8	0	32	51	26	15	8	4	23
Laboratory.....	158	30	8	1	2	25	0	2	25	7	13	8	0	0
Health education.....	7	57	0	0	0	14	14	57	14	0	14	0	0	0
Statistics.....	21	14	0	0	0	14	5	0	43	14	19	0	0	0
Administration.....	3	33	0	0	0	0	0	33	33	33	33	33	0	0
Other.....	37	22	14	0	0	8	0	0	24	5	24	0	0	14
<i>High-echelon</i>														
<b>Local</b> .....	<b>153</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
Medical.....	36	39	11	0	0	14	8	19	47	25	25	11	0	3
Nursing.....	78	46	10	0	0	10	10	28	49	36	26	1	2	0
Sanitation.....	15	20	0	7	0	7	7	7	47	27	20	0	0	13
Laboratory.....	8	25	0	0	0	12	0	12	50	50	0	0	0	0
Health education.....	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	33	33	0	0
Statistics.....	0													
Administration.....	4	50	0	0	0	25	0	25	25	25	25	0	0	0
Other.....	9	56	11	0	0	33	0	22	33	22	11	0	0	11
<b>State</b> .....	<b>161</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
Medical.....	31	39	10	3	0	6	19	16	36	23	13	0	3	0
Nursing.....	27	15	0	0	4	4	0	15	22	22	0	0	0	4
Sanitation.....	27	48	0	33	4	7	7	37	63	63	11	4	11	15
Laboratory.....	23	39	9	0	4	30	9	4	26	13	13	0	4	0
Health education.....	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0
Statistics.....	10	50	0	0	0	40	10	10	30	20	0	0	0	10
Administration.....	11	27	9	0	0	9	0	9	9	9	0	0	0	0
Other.....	27	30	0	0	0	11	0	22	30	18	4	0	0	11

<sup>1</sup> Includes personnel in visiting nurse associations.

**Table 6. Percentage of workers desiring to leave public health and of all other workers dissatisfied with specified aspects of their jobs**

Cause of dissatisfaction	Workers desiring to leave public health (49)	All other workers (1,049)
Inadequate salary	41	21
Lack of freedom and responsibility	31	5
Lack of recognition and appreciation	29	12
Lack of a feeling of belonging	20	5
Lack of opportunities for advancement	18	8
Too much clerical work	16	18
Inadequate work facilities	10	15
Public health in general	45	14

frequent among staff personnel in State health departments. Relatively few of the staff laboratory personnel in State health departments or of the staff physicians in either State or local jurisdictions found their jobs satisfying in this respect. By contrast, a relatively large number of high-echelon nursing personnel in local agencies and of high-echelon sanitation personnel in State agencies found satisfaction in the freedom and responsibility for decisions and action which their jobs offered.

Four percent complained because so much of the work was indoor, office work. This objection was met with more frequently among high-echelon than staff personnel, and most frequently among high-echelon medical personnel in State health departments. On the other hand, 8 percent enjoyed their jobs because of the outdoor work involved. For all practical purposes, however, this feeling was restricted to staff and high-echelon sanitation personnel in State and local agencies and to staff nurses in local agencies. None of the workers in this study expressed a dislike of outdoor work or satisfaction with indoor work.

Three percent of the workers complained that the working day was too long. Complaints were more frequent among State than local personnel, principally because of the dissatisfaction of members of the sanitation service with this aspect of their jobs. Eighteen percent of the workers expressed satisfaction with the length of the working day. Such positive

feelings were least frequent among high-echelon personnel in State health departments.

Less than 2 percent of the workers felt that the work was too arduous. Four percent considered it important to mention that the work was not arduous.

#### Workers Desiring to Leave Public Health

Forty-nine of the one thousand ninety-eight workers interviewed in this study stated that they would like to leave public health for another career. In table 6 are shown the percentages of these workers and of all other workers who were dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs. From these data, it can be seen that expressions of dissatisfaction were considerably more frequent among the workers who wished to leave public health. A much larger percentage of these workers than of all other workers were dissatisfied with low salaries, lack of responsibility and freedom of action, the absence of opportunities for advancement, and the lack of recognition and a sense of belonging in the agency, as well as with public health in general.

The relative importance of the various causes of dissatisfaction is shown in another frame of reference in table 7, which records the percentage of all dissatisfied workers in each category who desire to leave public health. These

**Table 7. Percentage of dissatisfied workers who desire to leave public health**

Cause of dissatisfaction	Total number dissatisfied	Workers desiring to leave public health	
		Number dissatisfied	Percent of total dissatisfied
Inadequate salary	240	20	8.3
Lack of freedom and responsibility	68	15	22.0
Lack of recognition and appreciation	140	14	10.0
Lack of a feeling of belonging	62	10	16.1
Lack of opportunities for advancement	93	9	9.7
Too much clerical work	197	8	4.1
Inadequate work facilities	162	5	3.1
Public health in general	169	22	13.0

data indicate that the feeling of a lack of freedom and responsibility is the most potent factor contributing to the desire to leave public health. Almost 1 in 4 of those who feel this lack in their work want to give up public health work altogether. Lack of a feeling of belonging in the agency would seem to be another potent factor, for 1 in 6 workers who mentioned this lack wish to leave public health. These two areas of dissatisfaction are ones in which remedies may be found through improved administration, without additional funds.

### Summary and Conclusions

Fourteen percent of the workers were unhappy about public health work in general. These feelings were not associated with governmental or administrative level or service. Although the general dislike for public health of some of the workers might be related to the character of current public health organization and practice, it would seem safe to say that often it is, rather, a reflection of personal incompatibility to this type of work, and that both public health and the individual concerned would benefit in the long run by the withdrawal of this group from public health.

Specific causes of dissatisfaction mentioned frequently were: inadequate salary, excessive clerical work, inadequate work facilities, lack of recognition and appreciation in the agency, lack of opportunity for advancement, lack of responsibility and freedom of action, and the absence of a feeling of belonging in the agency. They were voiced, in the order given, by 20, 16, 14, 11, 8, 6, and 5 percent of the workers.

Although many of these complaints were shared by all, regardless of governmental level, administrative position, or service, these factors played an important role in a number of instances. Thus, dissatisfaction with salary appeared to be most common among sanitation personnel in local health departments and nurses in supervisory and administrative positions in State health departments. Staff sanitation and laboratory personnel in State health departments tended to be disturbed about the lack of opportunities for advancement and the meager recognition and appreciation which they received. Furthermore, State staff personnel

generally, and the laboratory workers particularly, were most apt to feel that they missed a feeling of belonging in the agency.

Dissatisfaction because of lack of responsibility and freedom of action occurred most frequently among staff medical personnel in both State and local health departments and among staff sanitation personnel in State health departments. The burden of clerical work seemed to be felt most heavily by sanitation workers and staff physicians in State health departments and by high-echelon nurses in local agencies. Laboratory and statistics personnel were most prone to complain of inadequate working facilities.

Sixty percent of the workers expressed satisfaction with their work in public health. The greatest single source of satisfaction for public health workers was not in their jobs but in their associates. Twenty-nine percent of the workers chose to emphasize the satisfying nature of relationships with their co-workers. The next most frequent source of satisfaction was the personal gratification which came with a feeling of responsibility and freedom to make decisions and take appropriate action. About one-fourth of the workers said that this characteristic of the work was particularly satisfying to them. Among the next five most frequent sources of satisfaction, each reported by at least 10 percent of the workers, were two which might be classified as meeting emotional needs. These were a feeling of belonging in the organization and recognition and appreciation of the worker's contributions. The other three were concerned with length of the working day, salary, and job security.

Although such economic considerations as salary and security are important determinants of the public health worker's feelings about his job, matters of a more personal nature, such as relationships with co-workers, a feeling of belonging, recognition and appreciation, and the sense of importance which results from having responsibility and exercising authority, are at least equally important. It should be possible, even without additional funds, to improve these aspects of the public health worker's job through proper administrative practices.

Few will care to deny that, as a general rule, burdening professional personnel with clerical

work is evidence of improper administration. Perhaps it is not equally apparent, but it is true nonetheless, that proper administrative practices can be effective in fostering good interpersonal relations on the job. They can also provide for recognition and appreciation of the worker's efforts and accomplishments. A feeling of belonging will grow in any organization that is administered in such fashion that a sense of mission is inculcated not only in the

men at the top but in every member of the team. Moreover, the proper delegation of authority and responsibility is essential to day-to-day efficiency and, perhaps even more important, to the morale and health of the organization.

Too often, the health of the organization is overlooked in our preoccupation with the health of the community. This practice will inevitably detract from the success of public health programs.

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